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Addendum

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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001 (item 4 (b))

Section 25. Humanitarian assistance

1. At its 29th meeting, on 23 June 1999, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered section 25, Humanitarian assistance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001 (A/54/6 (Sect. 25)).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the budget section and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration thereof.

Discussion

3. Support was given to the activities undertaken by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The Committee noted the importance of the programme of work and recalled the high priority given to humanitarian assistance in the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001.

4. It was also noted that the proposed programme budget reflected adjustments made in the structure of the Office with a view to enhancing the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and relocating some functions to the United Nations Office at Geneva. It was noted that the advantages of the Office at Geneva were its time-zone and proximity to the operational agencies and to the regions where the activities in the field of humanitarian assistance are being carried out.

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5. Concern was expressed about the balance between regular budget and extrabudgetary resources and about the use of extrabudgetary resources to finance core activities, which should be funded from the regular budget.

6. It was also noted that the results of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction will be reported to the Economic and Social Council in July 1999, as the decade will end this year. Subject to the decisions of the General Assembly, activities carried out under subprogramme 3, natural disaster reduction, will continue during the biennium 2000–2001.

7. Views were expressed on the importance of early warning of natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies, as well as the need for timely response to disasters and emergencies that have humanitarian consequences. Support was expressed for strengthening early warning mechanisms.

8. The view was expressed that the programme of work seemed to be somewhat ambitious for the level of budgetary resources proposed for the year 2000–2001. Efforts should be made therefore, for better coordination of activities with other United Nations players. In this connection, it was also noted that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee database on humanitarian policy initiatives was set up to avoid duplication of policy and functions among the United Nations agencies.

9. The view was also expressed that the existence of extrabudgetary posts may not be automatically recognized as a justification for the establishment of new posts funded by regular budgetary funds.

10. With respect to the narratives of expected accomplishments under the programme of work, the view was expressed that efforts should be made to define measures for the expected accomplishments in order to facilitate objective assessment.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of section 25, Humanitarian assistance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001, subject to the following modifications:

(a) In the sixth line of paragraph 25.6, the words "notably the Security Council" should be deleted;

(b) Paragraph 25.34 (a) (iii) should be renumbered and placed under subparagraph 25.34 (c).

12. The Committee noted that the provision of a grant from the regular budget of the United Nations to the United Nations Development Programme, as recommended in the report of the Secretary-General on methods of financing activities for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness beyond the biennium 1998–1999 (A/53/641), in connection with the divested activities for disaster mitigation has not yet been adopted by the General Assembly.